

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 19, 2005.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI, a Senator from the State of Alaska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Ms. MURKOWSKI assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, there will be a period of morning business this morning. Over the course of this morning, the House has passed both conference reports, the DOD appropriations conference report and the spending reduction reconciliation report, as well, early this morning. The first DOD appropriations passed 308 to 106 and the spending reconciliation 212 to 206 in the House just a few hours ago.

As our colleagues know, we have been waiting for House action on those bills so those bills could be sent to this body. They have now completed their work on DOD appropriations, DOD authorization, and the spending reconciliation bill, all three of which we will be addressing over the next several days.

There has been a tremendous amount of work among and between the House and the Senate and among various interested parties, and now we are on the final stretch before the holiday season. It will be a difficult time to get through the next couple of days because of a lot of tension, but I ask for our colleagues' understanding and patience as we go through what will be challenging for us as quickly as possible to address these issues. But all of these will be addressed, plus many oth-

ers. We will be working over the course of the morning to schedule both conference reports, DOD appropriations and the spending reconciliation conference report.

I hope we can schedule Defense authorization, which is another bill we have had on the floor and off the floor and on the floor, and Chairman WARNER has done a tremendous job with that bill. We were hoping to do that several days ago, but the House had not acted on it until this morning. It has now been completed, and we are ready to go to that hopefully this morning. Hopefully here in a few minutes we will have a short time agreement, and then I will be working with the Democratic leader to schedule an appropriate time for that vote.

On the deficit reduction conference report, as my colleagues know, we have 10 hours for debate before that vote. We want to start that time as soon as we can. Every hour we put that off is just an hour later that we will get out of here. We want to get that time started and that debate started as soon as possible—10 hours before we vote on the deficit reduction conference report.

A number of other issues are outstanding. In terms of judges, I am not sure exactly when the next vote will be until we work out the schedule this morning. We will not have any rollcall votes this morning, but I think we have told all of our colleagues that from noon on, we may well be voting. We will just have to alert people in terms of the time.

BOY SCOUTS AND GIRL SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, yesterday I had the pleasure of hosting Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts here in the Nation's Capitol in celebration with an event that looked at a bill that will be included in the Department of Defense appropriations bill, and this bill is the Support our Troops Act of 2005. We had an event to celebrate. We had a little press conference, and with the hot lights actually one of the Scouts got a little faint, which many of us do, and it was remarkable to see the Scouts' reaction. They knew exactly what to do and how to handle it as we stood before those cameras.

The event yesterday highlighted the tremendous contributions of Scouting, a much beloved tradition in this country under congressional charter in 1910 and since that point in time has served over 110 million Americans as participants in Scouting. Our efforts here in the Senate have been to protect that tradition for generations to come.

I have worked very closely with Roy Williams, the chief Scout executive for the Boy Scouts of America, and John Cushman, the national president of the Boy Scouts of America, in fashioning this legislation. Both were there at that event yesterday, as well as Troop 1100 from Burke, VA.

I have worked closely with Roy and John to craft what is commonsense

legislation, the Support our Troops Act of 2005. It will be passed here hopefully a little bit later today as part of that DOD bill. It passed this floor in an overwhelming, bipartisan way earlier this year.

The bill is a straightforward victory for the Boy Scouts of America as well as other youth organizations that are helping to mold the hearts and the minds of our young generation today.

Without question, the success of Scouting relies on the commitment of the Scouts and their leaders and their parents. But Scouting also depends on having equal access to public facilities and participation in public programs and forums that allow Scouts to learn their field craft, to sharpen their skills, contribute to their community, and to learn the values that make America great.

Over the last few years, the Boy Scouts have been subjected to repeated attempts to exclude them from public facilities. The attacks have mounted so quickly that exclusion from Government forums has become the greatest legal challenge for the existence of the Boy Scouts.

For example, last year, the Department of Defense was required to notify American military bases worldwide that they cannot provide support to or directly sponsor the Boy Scouts of America. This unfortunate directive came about because of a lawsuit—a vindictive lawsuit—by the American Civil Liberties Union to demand that the Government discontinue its support of the Scouts. Their reason? Because they argue the Scouts are a religious organization. Most Americans would not recognize camping and building trails and fellowship and voluntarism as distinctly religious activities, but the ACLU is bound and determined to undermine the Scouting mission at a time when probably more than ever in history our Nation yearns for stronger community ties, stronger family ties, and stronger fellowship, a culture of integrity, a culture of honesty, and a culture of character for our young people.

That is why I sponsored the Support Our Troops Act, to ensure that the Boy Scouts of America and the Girl Scouts of the United States of America are not subject to unfair legal assaults, to remove any doubt that Federal agencies may, indeed, welcome Scouts onto Federal property, to ensure that State and local governments cannot discriminate against the Scouts.

I have tremendous admiration for the Boy Scouts. I was a Boy Scout. The first question I had yesterday from Scouts was: Were you an Eagle Scout? I said, no, but the one goal I set and should have done was becoming an Eagle Scout.

Scouting meant much to my three boys, Harrison, Jonathan, and Bryan, all of whom participated in Scouts, each of whom I have had the opportunity to camp with many times, with